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Adventures of a service learning virgin: what students teach you and what you learn your own self

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ABSTRACT

Service learning is a robust pedagogic, a/approach to both teaching and learning which can be applied across of range of courses and disciplines. This work compares the learning that ensued for both students and Instructor over three semesters in a Graduate-level Nonprofit Management course in a Southern California Master of Public Administration program following introduction of a substantive service learning component into the course.

1. INTRODUCTION

Early in 2002, an elective survey course in Nonprofit Management in our Master of Public Administration (MPA) program was revised from the ground up and re-introduced with a substantive service learning component. The following essay explores the pitfalls, opportunities, and lessons ensuing for the Instructor who developed and taught the course, and how she came to improve it in succeeding iterations.

2. THEORETICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The course is grounded both theoretically and pedagogically in three sources. The first is what has been called a praxis approach to teaching and learning (e.g., O. White, 1977; Freire [1970] 1982; Denhardt, 1984; Hironimus-Wendt and Lovell-Troy, 1999). The assumption is that theory without practice is a hollow thing; practice without theory, impoverished absent practical value. Praxis, then, is the integration of theory and action.

The second source is, of course, service learning, a pedagogical approach that, at its heart, promotes reciprocity (i.e., what we can learn from the community and what the community can learn from us) born of community-student engagement and reflection (e.g., Hatcher and Bringle, 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff, 1994; Jacoby and Associates, 1996; Rhoads and Howard, 1998; Waddock and Post, 2000).

The third source is an amalgam of Brazilian educator Paulo Friere's ([1970] 1982; 1985) theory of "conscientzation" and Lev Vygotsky's (1978; 1986) social constructivism. Vygotsky argues that knowledge development is neither passive nor osmotic but rather is socially constructed, largely through dialogue and lived experience. Vygotsky (1986) also emphasizes what he terms "internalization," which refers to "the student's actively processing an experience, modifying the experience based on past experiences, and then integrating that experience into his or her way of thinking ... such ... that the old way of thinking is changed ..." (Dolittle, 1997, p. 84).

It is creation of shared understanding and, hence, meaning, that drives development of socially useful knowledge (e.g., Dewey, ([1916] 1964; [1927] 1954; Stage, et al., 1998; Driscoll, 1994; Das Gupta and Richardson, 1995). More precisely, a healthy group process, admixed with lived experience, produces a "dialectical interplay of many minds, not just one...." (Goodman, 1986, p. 87). In short, knowledge construction and meaning evolve, nearly organically, when "individuals engage socially in talk and activity about shared problems and tasks" (Driver, Asoko, Leach, Mortimer, and Scott, 1994, p. 7).

Friere rounds out both Vygotsky and the praxis approach quite nicely and, sounding very like John Dewey, says that genuine learning does not, cannot, proceed from the "banking concept of education" ([1970] 1982), which means it "cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas

to be 'consumed' by the discussants" ([1970] 1982, p. 77). Learning instead "consists in acts of cognition," not simply in information transference ([1970] 1982, p. 67). Hence, learning and knowledge development is an active social process that has as its hallmark transformative power. Such transformation "emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Friere, [1970] 1982, p. 58). Friere's conception of "transformation" further calls for teacher and student, together, to be "critical co-investigators" in knowledge development and learning. He advances the idea of "problem-posing education" (as distinct from "banking" education), which calls for "posing of the problems of men in their relations with the world" ([1970] 1982, p. 68), and which he variously characterizes as involving a "constant unveiling of reality" ([1970] 1982, p. 68), as "[regarding] dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality [and thus makes students] critical thinkers" ([1970] 1982, p. 71), and as transforming the banking education model ("teacher-of-the students and the students of the teacher") into the problem-posing model ("teacher-student with students-teachers") (p. 67).

Service learning mediates theory and practice. That is, it gives students the opportunity for significant interaction and experience with the community, after which they can reflect upon the experience and use academic learning and theory to help explain, interpret, and make meaningful conclusions about that which they have experienced. Moreover, when both student and community organization can genuinely share insights with one another, that is service learning--and praxis--at its best.

2.1 Course Development

The Community Service Learning Center (CSLC) on our campus is very much engaged with those of us on the faculty wishing to develop service learning courses. CSLC faculty and staff work closely with teaching faculty to a) help them to understand and to apply service learning pedagogy competently; b) direct them to academic and institutional resources in service of quality course development; c) help develop syllabi to ensure pedagogical rigor, and this includes assessment of student learning outcomes; d) link community agencies with needs that are consistent with course goals of each instructor; and e) support teaching faculty efforts throughout the entire course development/teaching/evaluation process. CSLC also administers both follow-up interviews with and written surveys to Instructors to get an overall evaluation of their experiences with the vagaries of service learning pedagogy.

One of the many benefits of a supportive CSLC, or equivalent, is that the rigor demanded during syllabus/course development led this Instructor to produce syllabi of much higher quality than she had in the past. For example, the "Course Goals" section of her syllabi had been rather ambiguous. While broad course goals always were listed, there were no objectives to help students understand how they were to achieve the broad goals. So then, a traditional course goal, "to introduce students to research and theories about nonprofit organizations", was elaborated upon with three objectives, which indicated that students should:

Objective 1: Understand dominant political, economic and policy theories of nonprofit organizations;

Objective 2: Understand the interdependence of community, nonprofits and government; and

Objective 3: Be able to articulate the important roles the nonprofit sector has assumed in American historical, economic, social and political life.

Another example concerns the broad goal "to use service learning principles to link theory and practice." This too was elaborated upon to include two objectives:

Objective 1: to use the service learning experience to "test" theory against real-world nonprofit agency management; and

Objective 2: to determine whether and why theory holds--or does not--in practice.

2.2 General Description of The Course

The overwhelming majority of service learning courses, nationwide, are offered at the undergraduate level, generally in nonmanagement disciplines (e.g., sociology, psychology, education). In such courses, therefore, students generally engage in program-focused, direct service activities. Such is the case at our institution. As this is a graduate-level management course, however, students enrolled in the class tend to be older, some with long and significant management experience. Hence, they are treated as "consultants" to the organizations with which they work.

Amy Kenworthy-U'Ren (1999; 2000) explains the "student as consultant" idea, which objective, she says, is to introduce "management students ... [to] real-world, concrete, professional, semester-long consulting experiences designed to enhance concepts and skills learned in the classroom." This, she calls the "'exposure and understanding' argument for service-learning integration" (2000, p. 55). Kenworthy-U'Ren's observations are particularly useful for a course such as this one, which focuses on management of 501(c)3 ("public benefit") nonprofits. That is, it introduces incipient or practicing nonprofit managers to the various functional areas of nonprofit organization management and the opportunity to apply academic knowledge, perhaps in new ways, to nonprofit management endeavor.

The course leads off with four weeks' introduction to the nonprofit sector as a whole: history, size, scope, dimensions; distinguishing characteristics of the sector; dominant theories of nonprofits, and intersectoral relations. Thereafter, the focus shifts to the functional areas of nonprofit management: fund development (individual and institutional); human resources management (both volunteers and paid staff); governance and governance roles; budgeting; and financial management.

2.3 Service Learning Projects in Brief

In the first iteration, the 19-member class worked with a young local nonprofit agency providing after-school mentoring and tutoring programs for children, K-5. Since the agency was so new, its felt management needs were far greater than any single class could meet. Hence, the Instructor and the agency, with a great deal of give and take on both sides, settled on three specific projects students could undertake: a volunteer recruitment plan; a fund development plan; and a marketing plan.

The second iteration proved to be a very interesting departure from the first, and developed far differently. In the former, time constraints prevented the Instructor from arranging for the CSLC to find an appropriate agency with which students could partner prior to the beginning of the semester. She therefore devised a term project which could have been developed with or without a service learning course component. The proposed project focused on an institutional readiness/assessment study of a substantive aspect of nonprofit management of import to an agency with which students were familiar (either as a staff person or volunteer). On the first night of class, the Instructor solicited the opinions of the 13 students, asking whether any would be interested in a) including a service learning component in the course; (b) identifying an agency with which they were familiar that could benefit from such an assessment; and c) presenting same to the agency. All students readily agreed to the service learning component, and three "volunteered" their agencies as project partners.

Agency "A" was a large, California (systemwide university) student association with 23 chapters. The organization was unusual in that the board had, largely by design, an annual turnover rate of nearly 100 percent. The objective of the assessment would be, first, to determine how the agency had heretofore been managing the annual mass exit and entry of board members; and, second, to provide the groundwork for a published, systemwide "how-to" manual to help chapters improve upon existing efforts.

Agency "B" was a small, 12-year old all-volunteer nonprofit providing short-term volunteer opportunities to working people who might not otherwise volunteer. It had no paid staff and, over the previous five years, service provision had dropped precipitously. The central problem was posited very succinctly: "The organization is dying." The objective of the assessment was a board revitalization and professionalization plan, which aim was to help the Board bring the

organization back from the brink.

Agency "C", a large, mature community center, emerged from the War on Poverty era and offered a comprehensive array of social service programs. Over time, the agency had undergone a series of organizational changes, tied in large measure to agency growth and to demands for improved accountability from funders. The objective of the assessment was to gauge the organization's capacity to manage growth.

Development of the third iteration resulted largely from the success of the second. Once again, all students agreed to the service learning component, and three "volunteered" their agencies as project partners.

Agency "D", relatively new and quite small, addressed the needs of victims (largely women and children) of sexual abuse. The agency required a Board development/capacity-building plan.

Agency "E" was a large, nationwide organization with many local chapters which built, with volunteer labor, affordable single-family housing. The local chapter had a volunteer recruitment and retention problem, and students undertook to develop strategies to ameliorate those problems.

Agency "F", also a large nationwide agency with many local chapters, provided technical assistance to nonprofits in the areas of general management, board development and training, and fund development. The agency had recently undertaken an initiative to foster youth leadership by developing a program to recruit and train young people, ages 12-18, for substantive roles on nonprofit boards of directors. Here, students focused on motivation and proper training of young people for leadership.

3. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SUCCEEDING ITERATIONS OF THE COURSE

3.1 Choosing Sides

In the first iteration, the Instructor believed the most democratic method for forming project groups was to draw names from a hat. Two or three complaints of "I don't want to do that!" prompted the Instructor to ask for volunteers to switch groups. When that idea was not productive, the groups stood as drawn. In succeeding iterations, the Instructor suggested that students could a) draw names from a hat; or b) form their own groups, based on individual interest. Students unanimously chose the latter, which proved very beneficial. First, it has allowed students to follow their own interests; second, and by sheer serendipity, the groups have been roughly the same size.

3.2 Relationship Between Students and Agencies

In the first iteration, the Instructor met with both the Board President and Executive Director of the partner agency designated by the CSLC, pre-semester, to determine what service learning project(s) students would undertake. Prior to that meeting, the Instructor had developed the course syllabus with assistance from CSLC, so the agency representatives were given a good idea of learning goals the Instructor had established. Together, Instructor and the agency representatives developed three projects the students would undertake.

In that first iteration, agency and students communicated with one another at will, through a team liaison designated by the team. The manner(s) and frequency with which student teams and agency communicated thereafter was up to them. In this case, the Executive Director was very responsive, and, in fact, tended to give students far more information than they requested. Hence, that process worked extremely well.

As noted, in succeeding iterations a rather "seat-of-the-pants" scenario ensued wherein both students and Instructor together worked to identify a management need, and to determine project objectives. But there was an important "twist" between the first iteration and its successors. In the latter, the agency representatives also were students. As it turns out, this did not present a problem. Upon reflection, it did not because a) of a single word ("leaders") uttered by a student on

the first night of each class; and b) the maturity and motivation of the classes as a whole.

As detailed above, during the first class session students and Instructor together identified the three community partner agencies with which we would work, and developed broad project objectives for those agencies. At the conclusion of those activities during both succeeding iterations, a student asked, "What's the role of the group leaders?" This gave the Instructor the opportunity to take a page from the Mary Parker Follett songbooks ([1918] 1965; 1924; 1949; Graham, 1995), and to heighten student awareness of healthy social processes (See "Process Matters", below). Hence, she responded, "There are no leaders."

Follett's perspective on leadership dovetails beautifully with the praxis approach, with Dewey in particular, and with Vygotsky and with Friere. Following from Follett's oft-cited "law of the situation" idea, Follett says that "... leadership is sometimes in one place and sometimes in another" (In Graham, p. 167), which is to suggest that each of us has distinctive competencies, knowledge, skills and/or abilities with which we can contribute to a common purpose. Moreover, if we follow the law of the situation, Follett contends, we will "unite those concerned in a study of the situation, to see what the situation demands, to discover the law of the situation and obey that..... Whenever it is obvious that the order arises from the situation, the question of someone commanding and someone obeying does not come up" (In Graham, p. 128).

Following from that, three points were underscored for students. First, all students, regardless of their relationship to our partner agencies were, first, last and always, students. Second, each member of the group had something of value to offer the common purpose in which they were engaged. For example, we might see that the distinctive competency the student cum agency representative brought to the process was knowledge of the agency generally. That is important. At the same time, perhaps that student is not as skilled at developing a literature review, but that another group member might be. That, too, is important. Finally, in making decisions about who on the team should undertake a specific task, students were reminded to ask this question: what does the situation demand? If the situation demands general information about the partner agency, one person is the "leader" in that situation. If, alternatively, it demands a good first-draft writer or editor, that person(s) is the leader in that situation. Thus given an alternative to the traditional view of leadership, students tended to evolve a workable, productive social group process.

3.3 Time for Group Work

One of the challenges with teaching students in a professional graduate program is time, or the lack of it, for group projects. Since the overwhelming majority of our students work full-time and have other extra-curricular obligations, this precluded students from meeting as regularly as they would have preferred. In the first iteration, therefore, the Instructor (with students' permission) prepared and distributed an Email/telephone number roster which listed all students' contact information. As that mechanism worked very well the first time, such was used in succeeding iterations.

In the first iteration, one class session per month was allocated in the syllabus to in-class group work, interspersed with "check-in sessions" every two weeks when students would briefly present to their colleagues in the class an update on individual group progress. However, it became clear that more in-class group work time was required. Hence, the Instructor modified the syllabus, allocated less time to traditional lecture and discussion activities, and made more time for group work. This was crucial, for two reasons. First, the projects were very complex and hence required significant face-to-face time; second, and in the end, both students and Instructor were convinced this was time well-spent as the quality of the end-product was better than it might otherwise have been.

In succeeding iterations, the Instructor did not allocate much time for in-class group work for the first eight weeks of the semester. This, because the first iteration had taught her that students could not simply "jump" into their projects, willy-nilly. First must come some context, knowledge and team social process development. Thereafter, and as the end of the semester (and thus the end of project development) approached, more in-class group time was required. Again, the syllabus was modified to allow for it, and that approach, too, worked well.

3.4 Reflection

One hallmark of a competent service learning course; indeed, of education generally, is the opportunity for reflection, as Chicago Pragmatists John Dewey and George Herbert Mead (1934) understand the term. For them, education is a primary mechanism which helps people understand that they live in a larger world, and that their actions matter in the world. As school activities are geared to advance such understanding, they serve "to draw together the various segments of a community and to produce a sounder knowledge of community on the basis of which genuine [social] progress can be promoted" (Rucker, 1969, p. 97).

Dewey ([1916] 1964) elaborates upon that idea, suggesting that scientific methods alone are insufficient in social inquiry. What matters is participation in the inquiry. This means that "...in a social inquiry the persons for whom something is a problem must themselves partake in the inquiry, must come to agreement on goals and means, and must themselves test the proposed solution in terms of its effects on their lives" (Morris, 1970, pp. 161-162).

Dewey also cleaves to the idea that, among other things, "the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming" (([1916] 1964), pp. 49-50). In short, never should we "separate knowing from doing" (Damico, 1978, p. 34). Since we learn by doing, and doing by any other name is "activity" (i.e., the Pragmatic idea of acting with purpose or aim), substantive participation is essential. And substantive participation gives rise to reflection. Mead, for example, suggests that learning is essentially social and.., social awareness comes naturally when teaching proceeds socially. Learning ... should come from the conversation of concrete individuals rather than from pale abstractions of thought. We are social beings; our intellects are social products; and education remains partial and flimsy unless our sociality is explicitly used (Rucker, p. 93).

But! To be socially useful, reflection requires genuine communication, what Mead calls "universal discourse." As it is with Follett and Dewey, Mead does not believe individuals live or act in isolation. Hence, it follows that only within the context of the social, experiential character of human life can self-consciousness, reflection, and "communality of understanding" or meaning--all born of communication--flower. For Mead, communication is "the organizing process in the community" (p. 327), and is "the medium through which ... co-operative activities can be carried on in the self-conscious society" (p. 259). Hence, to be "universal," discourse must be "continually revised" (p. 269). Thus, "universal discourse" indicates a need for circular, reflective processes of interaction.

With Dewey and Mead as philosophical and theoretical standardbearers in this section, let us turn now to development of reflection opportunities for the course under discussion. The Instructor defines "reflection" quite broadly, and believes that quality reflection can be brought to bear upon any number and type of assignments. Good thing, too: the first attempts did not fare very well.

In the first iteration, the first of two "reflective opportunities" concerned applying to the agency with which we were working Peter Berger's and Richard J. Neuhaus's (1977) concept of "mediating structures", a powerful theoretical construct that has propelled much writing on nonprofit organizations since the late 1970's. Briefly, Berger and Neuhaus suggest that nonprofit organizations mediate two essential spheres of human life: private (family) and public (the State). They say the State is "hard," distant, bureaucratic, impersonal, oppressive; while the family may be "soft", mercurial, unreliable. Enter nonprofits, Berger and Neuhaus suggest. Because such organizations are nestled in the chasm between our private and public lives, they can help the individual derive meaning, get comfort, and a sense of "home" in an otherwise conflictive world. The assignment called for students to use Berger and Neuhaus's theory, together with what they knew about their partner agency, to respond thoughtfully to these questions: 1) Does the community agency with which we were working, mediate? 2) If so, in what ways does it accomplish this? 3) if it does not mediate, what reasons might be cited for that?

Although it was thought that the "mediating structures" construct would be a quite useful exemplar of reflection and praxis, student responses did not exhibit the intellectual depth the Instructor found sufficient. The reasons are not clear; however, two may be cited. First, students generally have very little opportunity to apply theory to practice, and the

assignment might have been, or was seen to be, too difficult/time-consuming for them. Second, it also may be that students saw the assignment itself rather as a "distraction" from their primary objective: the service learning project. Elsewhere, I have called this phenomenon, "hyperinstrumentalism" (Dede, 2002).

In succeeding iterations, the Instructor thought it wiser to present the Berger and Neuhaus reflection opportunity much later in the course and used it as a final exam question. It is difficult to determine whether the answers would have proved more satisfactory than those in the first iteration. Students have a choice of answering three out of five questions in the exam, and no one yet has chosen the Berger and Neuhaus.

To replace the Berger and Neuhaus in succeeding iterations, the Instructor assigned a different kind of reflective work, which called for students to identify one substantive theory of nonprofit organizations (whether economic, policy, or political theory), and to assess the theory's usefulness for nonprofit management practice. In terms of quality of reflection, responses to this assignment have been quite good. The second of two reflective opportunities in the original iteration called for students to respond thoughtfully to three questions (in succeeding iterations, this assignment, too, became a final exam question):

1. You are working on management issues/problems identified by the agency. Apart from those, what other issues/problems have you identified that may have impact upon your issue/problem?

2. In what ways can or do these other issues/problems impact your issue/problem? (Here, reference to textbook readings and lecture/discussion notes was necessary for students to respond to this question competently.)

3. Based upon discussion in parts 1 and 2, what recommendations would you make to eliminate or reduce those impacts?

In the second iteration, a replacement assignment, a "Contemporary Issue Paper", asked students to identify one contemporary issue of interest or concern to nonprofit organizations (which the Instructor had to approve) and then to a) find five recent (pre-1999) articles in academic or professional journals in which the issue is addressed; and b) in their own words, and in no more than four double-spaced pages per article, write an annotation of each which identifies the main points in it, and the conclusions the author(s) draws.

The "assess a substantive theory" assignment has proven to be a good one and therefore has remained. The contemporary issue paper also has remained, although it now is a free-standing assignment, designed to help students get a start on the literature reviews for their service learning term projects.

For the third iteration, a true "reflective essay" assignment supplanted the contemporary issue paper. Here, students were asked to reflect upon this question: "In what specific ways has the service learning experience affected and/or changed you in a substantive sense?" In reflecting upon that question, they are instructed to determine whether they were, or were not, changed or affected in a substantive way(s), and to articulate the reasons for the change/no change.

In the main, "replacement" assignments, as they stand presently, have worked rather well. At the same time, the Instructor continues the search for substantive assignments that may prove more useful.

4. ADVENTURES OF A SERVICE LEARNING VIRGIN: WHAT STUDENTS TAUGHT AND WHAT I LEARNED MY OWN SELF

Although volumes could be written on Instructor learning achieved between the first and succeeding iterations, the top five lessons learned (to date) are addressed. The expectation is that there are many lessons yet to be learned.

4.1 Lesson 1: Balancing Educational Objectives with Agency Partner Need is Hard

One oft-cited difficulty faculty and community agency representatives face in the service learning process is the constant push-pull of attempting to balance

agency need with the Instructor's academic goals. In fact, the "mixed marriage" of student learning, Instructor responsibility for establishing learning objectives, and agency need is very difficult to achieve. And, even when agreements are reached beforehand, it may be axiomatic that sometimes such agreements are only a pause in the negotiations. Moreover, if one works with a community agency partner who has used traditional service learners (i.e., for direct service) in the past, agency expectations, particularly as regards the "student as consultant" philosophy, may be at odds with reality.

For example, during the first iteration negotiations with the community agency partner (which had used many service learners for direct service provision in the past) on the kinds of service learning term projects students would undertake, the Executive Director of the agency insisted that students prepare individual folders into which they were expected to place all manner of information about potential institutional funding sources. The Instructor observed that that a) was a clerical activity and, hence, was not a proper use of student time and expertise; b) both the agency representatives and the Instructor had already agreed that the students would engage in higher-level planning activities, not lower-level clerical tasks.; and c) was inconsistent with the

Instructors' learning goals and outcomes. In the end, the Instructor prevailed, but it took three meetings, several phone calls and untold patience to accomplish.

Difficulties that may ensue between Instructor and partner organization as demonstrated above are grounded in two fundamental facts that partner organizations often fail to understand. First, service learning is pedagogy, not free labor. It is a way of teaching and learning that strives to foster genuine linkages between student and community such that reciprocity (the sharing of knowledge, insights, and experience), born of engagement and reflection, can develop. Second, students are graded, not on the service learning itself, but on the learning outcomes deriving therefrom.

4.2 Lesson 2: You Don't Have to Run Yourself Ragged

At the conclusion of the first-iteration semester, the Instructor offered the following observation to the CSLC staffer who interviewed her: "I'm a big believer in service learning, but it damn near killed me." Upon reflection, both alone and with the CSLC staff, the Instructor found several factors to be at work in that statement.

First, service learning didn't nearly kill her. She nearly killed her. For an Instructor who runs a very tight classroom ship, who prefers to be in control, who tries to leave very little to chance, and who tends to focus on student learning outcomes, the difficulties faced in leaving students to make their own way, were legion. Service learning instructors, particularly those who tend to exhibit the tendencies noted above, often have a difficult time stepping back and allowing the process to proceed organically, as surely it must if genuine learning is to ensue.

A second variable at work in the first iteration concerned class composition. It was quite mixed. Sixty percent had never worked in a nonprofit organization; 15 percent had moderate to significant nonprofit management experience; and about 25 percent had held or were holding professional positions in nonprofit organizations (e.g., social worker, drug counselor, MFCC, pharmacist). Hence, overall, the class was comprised of students having no small experience and skill. Moreover, the three projects in the first iteration (i.e., comprehensive program volunteer recruitment, fund development, and marketing plans) all were very complex, and required that high levels of both student and Instructor experience and expertise be brought to bear.

In succeeding iterations, class composition was much more homogeneous, expertise and experience levels far lower, and there were fewer students. Also, projects were far less complex, and the maturity level of students in the second iteration in particular was much higher.

The important lesson here is that if the Instructor had paid more attention to Mary Follett's views on social process in the first iteration, allowing the situation to guide decision and action, it would have been easier for everyone. And, while the situation demanded that she back off, she did not. She believed she would not be doing her job if students did not

receive nearly limitless assistance. And, while the end products were outstanding (as reckoned both by the community agency partner and final grades for those projects), and students were rightly proud of their accomplishments, it took the Instructor several weeks to recover.

In succeeding iterations, it was clear that this lesson was well-learned. Now, the Instructor is much more sanguine, and will not intervene unless asked, or if she identifies a problem that could place the project(s), or student grades, in jeopardy. And note: while not nearly as complex as in the first iteration, service learning projects in succeeding iterations were nearly as good as in the first.

4.3 Lesson 3: Process Matters (But Sometimes it Needs a Boost)

Generally, group or team projects are anathema to students. Always, there is the concern that someone(s) in the group will not participate to capacity, or at all; or simply is not capable of participating at the level of other members. That knowledge notwithstanding, in the first iteration, the Instructor did what she had done with regard to previously-assigned group projects: she simply required it, and assumed that students would figure out how to work together competently. Her rationale always had been that, since the majority of managers undertake workplace activities and tasks in groups, and since the majority of students were workplace managers, group work in this context could, to be consistent with the praxis approach, make use of that workplace experience, and could build upon that experience.

In no iteration were there conflicts between students and the partner agency; however, conflicts between and among students were very much in evidence during the first iteration in particular. On at least three occasions, the Instructor was asked to intervene/mediate and, while that process worked, that conflict unresolved by participants emerged at all, was troublesome. In succeeding iterations, therefore, and in the interest of a) fostering a healthy group process; and b) ensuring full and competent participation by all group members, two new mechanisms were developed and added to two developed for the first iteration.

The two mechanisms developed for the first iteration and used during all its successors were, first, end-of-term written Peer Evaluations, required of all students. That is, using a standardized evaluation form available from the CSLC, students filled out such a form for each team member, including themselves. Second, all students in each group would receive the same grade for the Service Learning Term Project.

To those were added a "Student Performance Pledge", developed and agreed upon by both students and Instructor and subsequently signed by each student. The second mechanism, an Instructor-led discussion of Mary Follett's social process view, was equally valuable as students began to see the process, and their roles in it, from a much different perspective. Both the "Performance Pledge" and discussion of Follett have had remarkable qualitative effect upon student performance, cooperation and collaboration. Of particular import was Follett's ideas on leadership and the "law of the situation." The Instructor is convinced these mechanisms worked well because of the emphasis both place upon personal responsibility.

4.4 Lesson 4: Frustration is Okay

Students tend to be great levelers. They can be very adept at moderating the behavior of their peers, and can effectively moderate Instructor behavior as well. At the same time, and in all iterations, the Instructor noted with some surprise that students also are reluctant to show frustration, will tend not to confront it, and will attempt to muddle along rather than attempting to identify the source(s) of, and appropriate response to, that frustration source. Frustration was at its height around mid-term.

This frustration appeared to emerge from three sources. First, semester-long group projects are difficult for many students. They require discipline, sustained attention, and patience with a process that may not, and probably does not, work to everyone's satisfaction or on everyone's internal clock. Second, by mid-term, even the lowest-functioning group had gathered a significant amount of information, and group members began to feel overwhelmed by its sheer volume.

They wondered how to integrate it into their projects competently, and who would be responsible for such integration. Finally, their peers in the group, particularly those who had failed to participate to capacity, were a mighty source of frustration.

In the first iteration, the Instructor failed to see the extent to which frustration was affecting students (although she certainly noted it), and did not learn until many weeks after semesters' end just how dramatically it had influenced both learning and development of the social process. By then, unfortunately, there was nothing she could have done to mitigate those problems.

In succeeding iterations, however, she began monitoring frustration levels very closely and much earlier in the semester. In addition, and about two weeks before mid-term when she earlier had identified frustration would be at its peak, she opened the class session by asking, "Who's frustrated with the projects?" Unsurprisingly, perhaps, nearly every hand in the room was raised. The Instructor's response was, "Good! You're right on timer" That simple comment caused a collective sigh of relief because students could see that they were not alone, and that frustration was predictable. Moreover, one could watch the frustration level drop palpably, as students came to remember that frustration is transient.

This was followed by a brief "reminder discussion" of Follett's social process cum "law of the situation" view. Students were asked to recall that frustration and conflict are organic elements of a social process, that they also are essential elements if the social process is to be optimally beneficial, and that both frustration and conflict can be, should be, used creatively and constructively in group development. These mechanisms seem to have gone a long way toward reducing student frustration levels.

One other "frustration buster", which any sensical Instructor would have required (but in this case did not), was submission of a mid-term "where we're at draft" of the final product. While not required in the first iteration, it was in succeeding iterations. This mid-term draft was largely developmental, and allowed both Instructor and student to stay on the same page, to allow the Instructor to see how well the project was developing, and to determine what direction or recommendations, if any, she could provide. Its absence in the first iteration was detrimental, but its presence has proven to be very useful since.

4.5 Lesson 5: Grades Aren't Everything, Despite What Students Tell You

Students tend to be preoccupied with grades; specifically, with getting good grades. No surprise there. Sometimes, however, the drive for good grades can negatively impact learning. Indeed, learning can be lost. No surprise there either. In each iteration, therefore, the Instructor took extraordinary steps to impress upon students that if they attended to the needs of the partner agency in their projects, and focused their efforts on learning "best-practice" strategies and methods for meeting to those needs, the projects--and their grades--would take care of themselves.

These efforts have proven to be largely fruitless, as students continue their lifelong preoccupation with grades. Still, what we in education generally must address is this: what matters is the kind and quality of learning derived from the learning experience, service learning or otherwise. Therefore, the objective outcomes of service learning (i.e., project reports for partner agencies) must be presented with an eye to communicating to students that this is not simply another term paper, nor is it a routine research paper. It is evidence of learning, but it is not the learning itself.

We all must come to understand that genuine learning, in fact, is a product of attentive and genuine instruction, of competent social processes and of individual responsibility. Second, learning, absent relationship to give it meaning, is vacuous. This, because to have any social value at all, learning and the knowledge deriving therefrom must be grounded in relationship-based processes if they are to serve a socially productive end. Finally, and more broadly, instructor-student-community interaction and relationship-building are essentialities of a stable civil society. We should not want, nor strive for, less.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Service learning pedagogy can be applied successfully across a range of courses and disciplines. At minimum, the pedagogy can unite "town and gown" in creative, responsible and useful ways. Optimally, it can teach or remind students, as Dewey says, that they "... live in a world where other persons live too. Our acts affect them. They perceive these effects, and react upon us in consequence" ([1922] 1930, pp. 297-298).

Recall that the pedagogical and theoretical contributors to this work all argue that the "banking concept of education" cannot stand (Friere); that knowledge development is socially constructed (Friere, Vygotsky, Follett, Dewey and Mead); and, therefore, that it is only through substantive participation in an inquiry that people can come to know that our "education remains partial and flimsy unless our sociality is explicitly used" (Rucker, p. 93). Service learning is a metaphorical reminder that substantive participation and socially constructed knowledge are essential both to learning and to understanding the social world. They also are essential to mitigating or eradicating elements that may place that social world at risk. And if, as Dewey suggest, education alone bridges the gap between social problem awareness and social problem mitigation, service learning can go a long way toward serving as bridge-builder.

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